

Atlantis' external tank, SRBs mated in VAB

Expedition 14 crew busy with experiments on ISS



◆ **Shuttle Update:** Final vehicle closeouts are under way in preparation for technicians to move **Atlantis** to the Vehicle Assembly Building on Feb. 7. Technicians worked last week to close out the orbiter's forward reaction control system, the midbody and aft areas. The payload bay doors were cycled and closed for flight. The payload bay door strongbacks were removed Jan. 18. Final orbiter power down is scheduled for Thursday.

Space Shuttle Program managers held a review Jan. 16 and gave the go-ahead to mate the external tank with the solid rocket boosters. On Friday, the external tank, designated ET-124, was moved from the checkout cell in the Vehicle Assembly Building for the mating in high bay 1.

◆ **ISS Update:** New supplies arrived at the International Space Station Friday night as an unpiloted Russian cargo spacecraft docked to the Pirs Docking Compartment. The crew opened the hatch to the newly arrived Progress and deactivated its systems. They will unload the cargo over the next few weeks.

The Expedition 14 crew worked last week on a variety of station maintenance tasks and science experiments. Commander Michael Lopez-Alegria and Flight Engineer Suni Williams reported what they ate and drank as part of an experiment known as Nutrition, and collected blood and

urine samples. The experiment looks at how the human body processes nutrients in microgravity.

Lopez-Alegria replaced limited-life components in the Volatile Organic Analyzer (VOA), part of the Crew Health Care System. The VOA is a gas analysis system used to assess the levels of organic compounds in the station atmosphere, some of which could become harmful to the crew in high concentrations. The old components will be returned to Earth on the next shuttle mission.

Williams focused on work with lentil seedlings as part of an experiment called Threshold Acceleration for Gravisensing, or "Gravi." The experiment uses a European Modular Cultivation System centrifuge to document the effects of varying levels of gravity on the development of plant roots with an eye toward growing edible plants for future, long-duration spaceflights.

Flight Engineer Mikhail Tyurin conducted an instrumented workout on a stationary bicycle to collect data on ways to limit bone- and muscle-density loss associated with long-duration spaceflights.

All three crew members also spoke with experts on the ground planning the upcoming Expedition 14 spacewalks. Lopez-Alegria, Tyurin and Williams will begin onboard preparations for those spacewalks along with a fourth to remove the navigation antenna from Progress 23. The first three spacewalks by Lopez-

Alegria and Williams are designed to continue outfitting the newly activated cooling systems for the station's truss and to continue preparations for the relocation of the P6 solar array truss structure.

■ **Agency Dialogue** — "Ask a Question" is a new feature available to NASA employees in the Administrator's Corner on the InsideNASA Web site at <http://insidenasa.nasa.gov>.

Employees are invited to submit a question regarding the agency and its programs. Administrator Griffin will make every effort to answer as many questions as possible. Current plans call for posting questions and the administrator's responses at a regular interval, depending on the volume of questions asked. The new feature is intended to improve dialogue and communications within the agency by allowing individual employees to share their questions and concerns directly with senior management.

To submit your question, visit the Administrator's Corner at <http://insidenasa.nasa.gov>. Click on the "Ask a Question" link and complete the online form. The InsideNASA site will preserve the anonymity of all submitters unless they choose to provide their name.

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